
**Statement by H.E. Lucy Duncan
Ambassador for Disarmament**



**Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas
(EWIPA) Political Declaration Adoption
Ceremony, Dublin**

18 November 2022

Thank you, Chair.

I'm delighted to be here today at Dublin Castle for the historic adoption of this Political Declaration.

Explosive weapons have, of course, been used by militaries for centuries. But in the twentieth—and now twenty-first—centuries we've seen changes in the nature of war and how the majority of people live that create much greater risk to civilians from the use of explosive weapons.

Today, war is often fought in cities and towns, instead of battlefields away from populated centres. And conflicts are increasingly taking place *amidst* the civilian populations that inhabit those population centres, with explosive weapons even targeted *at* them in certain circumstances, and at other times without due regard to their safety.

Despite this, weapon systems and the norms of use around them have not always been sufficiently updated to take account of this new reality and to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law.

We know that many innocent civilians are killed, injured or traumatised by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Survivors are displaced from their homes, which are often damaged or destroyed in the process along with critical infrastructure on which communities depend – hospitals, power and water supply, transport networks and schools.

Of course, civilians have long borne the brunt of conflict. But when explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 90% of those killed or injured are civilians. How is that right?

The answer is, it's not. And that is why this political declaration is a tangible achievement, provided states implement it.

Through patient diplomacy, more than 70 governments have come together to say enough is enough. They commit themselves to upholding the law of armed conflict, and better protecting civilian populations in war torn regions around the world.

Aotearoa New Zealand calls on all states to endorse the Declaration as a meaningful contribution towards reducing civilian harm as a result of urban conflict. We undertake to play an active role in promoting the Declaration in the Indo-Pacific region with a view to achieving its universalisation and full implementation.

In doing so we look forward to continuing to work closely with other states, international organisations and civil society partners who have been so instrumental in keeping this issue on the global agenda.

Finally, please allow me to place on record our sincere gratitude for Ireland's leadership role in bringing us to this point. Your commitment to upholding international humanitarian law and promoting the protection of civilians has been evident throughout the tireless diplomacy required to get us to this point. We thank you for these efforts and for your generosity in hosting us here in Dublin.

I thank you.